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Because the open upper end 132 has a greater width A than the width B of the base 118, upper surfaces 130 of the ramps 124 bear indicia 127a, 127a which are not spaced in equal intervals. That is, a given rise in level 128 of the contents near the bottom edge of the side wall 116 requires a smaller volume than an equal rise in the level of the contents near the upper edge of the side wall 116. As a result, the indicia 127a, 127a are spaced upon the ramps 124 closer together near the top edge of the side wall 116 than at the bottom edge for an equivalent volume of contents 128. It will be understood by those skilled in the art that the progressive change in the diameter of the measuring cup 100 from the base 118 to the upper edge of the side wall 116 may also be accommodated by decreasing the slope of the ramps 124 from the lower edge of the side wall 116 to the upper edge of the side wall 116 while maintaining the spacing between indicia 127a, 127a along the ramps 124.

Also in this embodiment, the ramp tops 126 are continuous with an inner surface of the spout 114 to allow a user to more easily pour contents from the measuring cup 100 without spilling.

The side wall 116 has a lower portion 116a below the ramps 124 which is offset inwardly by the width of the ramp upper surfaces 130 from an upper portion 116b of the side wall 116. This offset allows other measuring cups 100' to nest within the measuring cup 100 and each other when stacked. More specifically, the lower portion 116a of the side wall 116, which is below the ramps 124, is integral with the lateral inner edges of the ramps, while the upper portion 116b, which is above the ramps, is integral with the lateral outer edges of the ramps.

FIGS. 7 and 8 show another embodiment of an inventive measuring cup 200. The measuring cup 200 has wall structure including a side wall 216 integral with a bottom wall or base 218 for cooperation therewith to define a cavity with an open upper end 232 having a width larger than the width of the bottom wall or base 218. Thus, the side wall 216 slopes outwardly away from the base 218 as the side wall 216 rises from its bottom edge to its top edge. The cup 200 has a handle 212 projecting from the side wall 216 adjacent to its upper end, and a spout 214 projecting from the upper end of the side wall 216 opposite the handle 212, the spout 214 having a lower entry end and an upper exit end at the open upper end 232. The measuring cup 200 has a pair of oppositely located, but identically sloped ramps 224 which are substantially continuous around the side wall inside surface 220 from the ramp bottom 225 toward the ramp top 226. That is, both ramps 224 rise symmetrically along the inside surface 220 of the side wall 216 from about the bottom edge of the side wall inside surface 220 generally opposite the spout 214 to near the top edge of the side wall 216 adjacent to the base of the spout 214.

Because the open upper end 232 has a greater width than the width of the base 218, upper surfaces 230 of the ramps 224 bear indicia 227a, 227a which are not spaced in equal intervals for the same reasons indicated above for the cup 100. It will be understood by those skilled in the art that the progressive change in the diameter of the measuring cup 200 from the base 218 to the upper edge of the side wall 216 may also be accommodated by decreasing the slope of the ramps 224 from the lower edge of the side wall 216 to the upper edge of the side wall 216 while maintaining the spacing between indicia 227a, 227a along the ramps 224.

The side wall 216 has a lower portion 216a below the ramps 224 which is offset inwardly by the width of the ramp upper surfaces 230 from an upper portion 216b of the side

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wall 216. More specifically, the lower portion 216a of the side wall 216, which is below the ramps 224, is integral with the lateral inner edges 224a of the ramps, while the upper portion 216b, which is above the ramps, is integral with the lateral outer edges 224b of the ramps.

The periphery of the bottom wall 218 lies in a base plane P to provide a stable support on an underlying support surface. The handle 212 is generally L-shaped, having a short arm 213 projecting laterally outwardly from the side wall 216 and integral at the outer end thereof with an elongated depending grip portion 215 which extends substantially perpendicular to the base plane P and terminates at a generally flat distal end 217 which lies substantially in the base plane P. Thus, when the measuring cup 200 is resting on its base or bottom wall 218, the end 217 provides an additional support point. Furthermore, the depending portion 215 of the handle 212 is covered with a grip sheath 219, preferably formed of a suitable flexible and cushioning elastomeric material, such as that sold under the trade name SANTOPRENE. This affords a comfortable, non-slip, frictional grip surface to facilitate grasping of the handle 212.

While in the disclosed embodiments the ramps have fixed or constant slopes, it will be appreciated that the slopes could vary. Also, while each of the disclosed embodiments has two ramps, a single ramp could suffice. Preferably, the entire measuring cup is formed of a transparent material, but, if desired, the ramps could be translucent to enhance contrast with the vessel side walls.

While the illustrated embodiments are cups, it will be appreciated that the principles of the invention are applicable to other vessels, such as bowls, ladles, spoons and the like and, indeed, to any vessel-defining structure, whether or not self-supporting and whether or not provided with a handle or a spout, and of any size or shape.

The matter set forth in the foregoing description and accompanying drawings is offered by way of illustration only and not as a limitation. While particular embodiments have been shown and described, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that changes and modifications may be made without departing from the broader aspects of applicants' contribution. The actual scope of the protection sought is intended to be defined in the following claims when viewed in their proper perspective based on the prior art.

What is claimed is:

1. A vessel comprising:

a wall structure defining a cavity with an open upper end for receiving contents having a measurable volume, a continuous ramp extending upwardly from adjacent to a lower end of the wall structure, and indicia positioned on the ramp so as to be observable by a user looking downwardly toward the open upper end and providing a readily observable indication of the volume of the contents of the vessel.

2. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the wall structure is self-supporting.

3. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the wall structure includes a bottom wall and an upstanding side wall.

4. The vessel of claim 3, wherein the side wall is substantially cylindrical in shape.

5. The vessel of claim 3, wherein the side wall is non-cylindrical in shape.

6. The vessel of claim 3, wherein the bottom wall and the open upper end are of substantially the same size.

7. The vessel of claim 3, wherein the open upper end is larger than the bottom wall.

8. The vessel of claim 1, wherein each of the bottom wall and the open upper end is generally oval in shape.

9. The vessel of claim 3, wherein the ramp extends from the bottom wall to the open upper end.

10. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the wall structure is formed of a light-transmitting material.

11. The vessel of claim 10, wherein the wall structure is transparent and the ramp is translucent.

12. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the wall structure is of unitary one-piece construction.

13. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the ramp is integral with the wall structure.

14. The vessel of claim 13, wherein the ramp has an upper surface facing the open upper end, the indicia being disposed on the upper surface.

15. The vessel of claim 14, wherein the ramp has laterally inner and outer edges, the wall structure including a portion above the ramp integral with the outer edge thereof and a portion below the ramp integral with the inner edge thereof.

16. The vessel of claim 1, wherein the ramp has a constant slope.

17. The vessel of claim 1, and further comprising a spout projecting outwardly from the wall structure and having an exit end at the open upper end and an entry end.

18. The vessel of claim 17, wherein the ramp extends from a lower end of the wall structure to the entry end of the spout.

19. The vessel of claim 17, wherein the ramp has an upper surface on which the indicia are disposed facing the open upper end, the spout having an inner surface continuous with the upper surface of the ramp.

20. The vessel of claim 1, and further comprising a handle extending outwardly from the wall structure.

21. The vessel of claim 20, and further comprising a spout on the wall structure opposite from the handle.

22. The vessel of claim 20, wherein the wall structure has a lower end lying in a base plane, the handle having a distal end spaced from the wall structure and disposed in the base plane.

23. The vessel of claim 22, wherein the handle includes an elongated portion extending substantially perpendicular to the base plane.

24. The measuring vessel of claim 20, and further comprising a grip sheath of elastomeric material disposed on the handle.

25. A vessel comprising:

a wall structure defining a cavity with an open upper end for receiving contents having a measurable volume, first and second continuous ramps extending upwardly from adjacent to a lower end of the wall structure and respectively adjacent to opposite sides of the wall structure, and

first and second indicia respectively positioned on the first and second ramps so as to be observable by a user looking downwardly toward the open upper end and providing readily observable indications of the volume of the contents of the vessel.

26. The vessel of claim 25, wherein the ramps are respectively disposed on opposite sides of the wall structure.

27. The vessel of claim 26, wherein each of the ramps is integral with the wall structure.

28. The vessel of claim 27, wherein each of the ramps has an upper surface facing the open upper end, the first and second indicia being respectively disposed on the upper surfaces of the ramps.

29. The vessel of claim 28, wherein each ramp has laterally inner and outer edges, the wall structure having a portion above the ramps integral with the outer edges and a portion below the ramps integral with the inner edges.

30. The vessel of claim 25, wherein the first indicia are different from the second indicia.

31. The vessel of claim 30, wherein the first indicia make up a scale in English units of measurement and the second indicia make up a scale in metric units of measurement.

32. The vessel of claim 25, wherein the ramps are joined at a common upper end.

33. The vessel of claim 32, and further comprising a spout projecting from the wall structure and having an exit end at the open upper end and an entry end therebelow, the upper end of the ramps being disposed at the entry end of the spout.

34. The vessel of claim 33, wherein the wall structure includes a bottom wall and an upstanding side wall integral with the bottom wall.

35. The vessel of claim 25, wherein the wall structure has a lower end lying in a base plane, and further comprising a handle projecting from the wall structure and having a distal end spaced from the wall structure and lying in the base plane.

36. The vessel of claim 35, and further comprising a grip sheath of elastomeric material disposed on the handle.

37. A vessel comprising:

a wall structure defining a cavity with an open upper end for receiving contents having a measurable volume, the wall structure having upstanding inner surface portions,

a continuous ramp extending upwardly from adjacent to a lower end of the wall structure and laterally from the inner surface portions, and

indicia positioned on the ramp so as to be observable by a user looking downwardly toward the open upper end and providing a readily observable indication of the volume of the contents of the vessel.

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